

Let's Talk About Human Trafficking

Talking to your child about human trafficking can be extremely difficult, but intentional conversations are important for prevention and keeping your child safe. This helpful guide was built to be an awareness tool for you and your child. Given that many trafficking victims are recruited as young as 13, awareness and education at a young age is essential.¹ Here are a few pointers on how to get the conversation started with your kids. More resources on human trafficking, social media safety, and grooming techniques can be found on our website.

To help your child identify warning signs and feel comfortable talking to you, approach it as a casual conversation. Below are dos and don'ts when talking with your child:

Dos

Talk about consent and being taken advantage of.

Give examples and practice asking for consent for hugs and other physical contact. Let them know they have autonomy over their body and can say no to unwanted touch or attention. Share examples of what being taken advantage of may look or feel like. Remind them that someone who loves them won't force them to do anything they are uncomfortable doing.

Not everyone is your friend. Remind your child that not everyone loves them as much as you do. Not everyone is out for their best interest but rather is looking for what they can get out of them. This is especially important if your child is using social media. Talk to your child about trusted adults they can go to when they feel unsafe. It may be you, your spouse, a teacher, pastor, aunt, uncle, grandparent, doctor, or police officer, etc.

Use words your child understands. Approach the discussion as a casual, open conversation. Use language that resonates with your child and doesn't go over their head.

Instill confidence in your child. Encourage your child by sharing their strengths and values as a person. Share that you trust them to make wise decisions. Remind them they are always in control of their decisions, no matter how much pressure they might feel.

Share your love and concern for their safety. Always respond to your child sharing concern for exploitation by first listening and showing empathy. Let them know you care about what they are feeling and are grateful they chose to tell you.

Don'ts

Use words or scenarios that might scare your child.

For example, using the term "human trafficking" may scare or confuse your child rather than educate them. Try not to use extreme or oversensitized examples of children being trafficked. This can sometimes be an oversimplification of grooming techniques and cause anxiety and is not always a true representation of a victim's experience.

Emphasize "scary" people. Creating a narrative about certain types or characteristics of people can create long-lasting prejudice and stereotypes. Rather define what actions are concerning to you. For example, someone they don't know wants to follow them on social media, someone is giving them unwanted compliments about their body, or someone is trying to convince them to keep secrets from their family.

Use buzzwords. Using language and words that are above your child's understanding will make it harder for them to understand and listen. It may make the conversation feel more like a lecture and they've done something wrong.

Induce fear. Avoid using words that victimize your child. Don't highlight weaknesses, this might make your child feel inadequate or scared to reach out for help.

Ask too many questions or make rash reactions. Refrain from asking too many specific questions about the situation or letting fearful emotions take over the conversation. This may make your child feel like they are to blame or regret confronting you about it.

So what is human trafficking? Human trafficking affects women, men, and children in every country of the world. Victims of human trafficking are unable to walk away, under the threat of violence, and forced to do things they don't want to do.

¹ Gabriele, F., et al. (2014). The Incidence of Human Trafficking in Ontario, Ontario Coalition Research Initiative

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People can be selfish and want to use another person to gain something for themselves. This might look like any of the below examples.

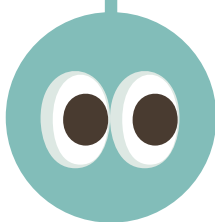


If you feel ..

- » Unsafe
- » Guilty for doing something
- » Like you don't have a choice
- » Uncomfortable with the way they touch or talk to you
- » Pressured to do something you're not comfortable with

If you hear...

- » Lots of compliments about your body or appearance
- » Promises that seems too good to be true
- » Asks you for money
- » Threats to share private information
- » Threats to hurt you or your family



If you see ..

- » They ask you questions but don't reply to or ignore your questions
- » Tries to gain your trust by relating to your likes and dislikes
- » Asks for personal information like your full name, address, school, etc.
- » Tells you that you must do something like send pictures or you'll get in trouble
- » Buys you nice things

Let's make a safety plan if you ever feel, see, or hear any of these things:

1. Let's make a list of trusted adults you will go to if you have any concerns or feel unsafe
2. Memorize important phone numbers so if there is an emergency we know who to call
3. Let's agree to not share personal information about ourselves on social media
4. We won't talk to people we don't know online
5. We will not meet someone we don't know without asking a trusted adult
6. Let's add preventive measures like safety settings on our phones and social media

See and feel safe in healthy relationships 